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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D C. 20548

CIVIL DIVISION

OCT 31 1969

Dear Mr. Cliff:

In June 1969, we requested your comments on a draft report concerning the Forest Service's planning for acquisition and operation of computers in its four western regions.]

We stated in the draft report that our review showed that the Forest Service had purchased and installed automatic data processing (ADP) equipment in the four western regions which was not sufficiently capable of meeting then existing and anticipated ADP workloads. We concluded that this situation occurred primarily because top management personnel of the Forest Service did not adequately participate in planning for the acquisition and operation of the ADP equipment.

The draft report also included a discussion of the current studies underway in the Forest Service to (1) determine management information needs, (2) develop an improved accounting system, and (3) determine the ADP requirements and equipment needed to develop an integrated data processing system. Because of the scope of these efforts, we stated our view that the Department's Office of Management Improvement (OMI) should participate more directly in all major aspects of the studies which concern the design, installation, and operation of the integrated data processing system. Such participation would be in line with OMI's general responsibility for coordinating and directing ADP activities within the Department and its specific responsibility for formulating standards and guidelines for a Department-wide ADP program

The Deputy Chief, Forest Service, in his comments on the draft report dated July 31, 1969, advised us of steps being taken to involve OMI in the Forest Service's study to determine ADP requirements and equipment. The Deputy Chief also stated that it was the Forest Service's position that its decision to select and purchase the ADP equipment installed in the four western regions was based on as good information on systems requirements as could be obtained at the time and that current efforts by the Forest Service represent a stage of development in applying total systems concepts, which is considerably more advanced than those which existed when plans were being made to install ADP equipment in the four western regions.

We continue to believe that participation by top management of the Forest Service in planning for the acquisition and operation of ADP equipment in the four western regions was not adequate. However, in view of

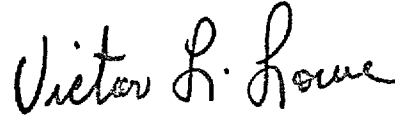
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the action taken with regard to our recommendation and after further consideration of the significant changes in the Forest Service's ADP operations contemplated as a result of the studies currently underway, we do not plan to pursue our assignment further at this time

Copies of this letter are being sent to the Acting Director, OMI, and to the Office of the Inspector General.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Victor L. Lowe". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Victor L. Lowe
Associate Director

Mr. Edward P. Cliff
Chief, Forest Service
Department of Agriculture